

On the eve of Town Meeting Day, Rep. Peter Welch called for a swift legislative response to the recent Citizens United Supreme Court decision allowing corporations to spend freely on political campaigns.

Welch proposed several measures Congress could enact immediately to ban "pay-to-play," prevent foreign influence in elections, enhance disclaimers and prevent corporations and unions from coordinating with candidates and parties. At the same time, Welch called for a constitutional amendment to clarify Congress' authority to limit corporate campaign contributions.

"In one fell swoop a slim majority of the Supreme Court upended nearly a century of practice and precedent barring corporations from taking part in political campaigns. In so doing, they have opened the door to a flood of corporate cash, which could drown out the voices of ordinary Americans," Welch said. "Congress must take action immediately to limit the influence of the Citizens United decision and work in the long term to overturn it."

Working with Rep. Chris Van Hollen and Sen. Charles Schumer, Welch announced his support for several measures to combat the Citizen United decision:

- Ban Pay-to-Play – Prevent government contractors and recipients of the Troubled Asset Relief Program from spending money on elections.
- Prevent foreign influence in elections – Ban corporations with 20 percent foreign ownership, a majority of foreign board members or with operations under the control of a foreign entity to spend money on U.S. elections.
- Enhance disclaimers to identify ad sponsors – Require CEOs to appear on camera to identify their responsibility for placing television advertisements and require the top corporate donors to shell organizations to appear in their ads.
- Prevent corporations and unions from coordinating activities with candidates and parties – Ban coordination within 90 days of a primary election for House and Senate races and 120 days for a presidential race.

Welch also announced his support for a constitutional amendment that would overturn the Citizens United decision by empowering Congress and the states to regulate political contributions by corporations.

Welch was joined at the press conference at the South Burlington city offices by Vermont League of Women Voters board member Vee Gordon, Vermont Public Interest Research Group executive director Paul Burns and Green Mountain Coffee Roasters vice president Paul Comey.